

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A starter for cranking an internal combustion engine having a ring gear, the starter comprising:
  - an electric motor;
  - an output shaft driven by the electric motor;
  - a pinion gear driven by the output shaft; ~~unit including a pinion gear and~~
  - a rotation-restricting ring fixedly connected to the pinion gear, the rotation-restricting ring having a series of depressions formed on its outer periphery, the pinion gear ~~unit~~ being helical-spline-coupled to the output shaft so that the pinion gear ~~unit~~ is pushed forward toward the ring gear to thereby engage with the ring gear when the output shaft is slowly rotated by the electrical motor and rotation of the pinion gear ~~unit~~ is restricted; and
  - a rotation-restricting member adapted to be engaged with the depressions of the rotation-restricting ring to restrict rotation of the pinion ~~gear unit, wherein:~~ gear;
  - a member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear when the pinion gear is engaged with the ring gear; and
  - a bearing member connected to the rotation-restricting ring for absorbing friction between the rotation-restricting ring and the member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear,
  - wherein the pinion gear and gear, the rotation-restricting ring and the bearing member are separately formed separately from each other and fixedly connected together in a co-axial relation one another, and

the bearing member is first connected to the rotation-restricting ring, thereby forming a rotation-restricting unit, and then the rotation-restricting ring is fixedly connected to the pinion gear.

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The starter as in ~~claim 4,~~claim 1, wherein:

the pinion gear has a cylindrical portion extending to its axial direction;

the rotation-restricting ~~unit is fixedly~~ring to which the bearing member is connected, is connected to the cylindrical portion not to cause relative rotation between the pinion gear and the rotation-restricting ~~unit;~~ring; and

a stopper means for preventing movement of the rotation-restricting ~~unit~~ring in the axial direction is provided on an axial end of the cylindrical portion.

6. (Currently Amended) The starter as in claim 5, ~~wherein:~~wherein the stopper means is a member formed separately from the cylindrical portion of the pinion gear and fixed to the cylindrical portion after the rotation-restricting ~~unit~~ring is connected to the cylindrical portion.

7. (Currently Amended) The starter as in ~~any one of claims 2-6,~~claim 1, ~~wherein:~~wherein the bearing member includes sealing means for preventing foreign particles or liquid from entering into the bearing member.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~A starter for cranking an internal combustion engine having a ring gear, the starter comprising: as in any one of claims 2-6, wherein:

an electric motor;

an output shaft driven by the electric motor;

a pinion gear driven by the output shaft;

a rotation-restricting ring fixedly connected to the pinion gear, the rotation-restricting ring having a series of depressions formed on its outer periphery, the pinion gear being helical-spline-coupled to the output shaft so that the pinion gear is pushed forward toward the ring gear to thereby engage with the ring gear when the output shaft is slowly rotated by the electrical motor and rotation of the pinion gear is restricted;

a rotation-restricting member adapted to be engaged with the depressions of the rotation-restricting ring to restrict rotation of the pinion gear;

a member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear when the pinion gear is engaged with the ring gear; and

a bearing member connected to the rotation-restricting ring for absorbing friction between the rotation-restricting ring and the member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear, the bearing member is being a radial bearing for reducing abrasive force in the radial direction of the pinion gear-unit-gear.

wherein the pinion gear, the rotation-restricting ring and the bearing member are formed separately from one another, and

the bearing member is first connected to the rotation-restricting ring, and then the rotation-restricting ring is fixedly connected to the pinion gear.